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ABSTRACT

This special community college edition of "Bridges to Student Success" serves to showcase the important role of student services within the community college and to highlight the creative initiatives at the core of the community college mission. This publication invited five community college leaders, many of whom began their careers in student affairs, to describe their vision of the community college of the future and to give their advice for those working in the student services field. The themes these leaders discuss highlight some of the themes seen in the descriptions of the 9 exemplary student affairs programs that follow. The programs include: (1) "The First-Semester Student Experience" (Moraine Valley Community College); (2) "Navigating the Academic Waters Workshop" (Georgia Perimeter College); (3) "Camp 'Of Course You Can!'" (Tomball College); (4) "Collaborative Intervention Teams Program for At-Risk Students" (Middlesex Community College); (5) "Financial Aid Appeals Retention Model" (Holyoke Community College); (6) "Conflict Management Services" (Madison Area Technical College); (7) "Online Student Government Elections" (Santa Fe Community College); (8) "Computer Connections" (John Wood Community College); and (9) "The Online Career Center" (Frederick Community College). (GCP)

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Bridges to Student Success

NASPA and NCSD Present 2003 Exemplary Programs

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NASPA and NCSD Present 2003 Exemplary Programs

BRIDGES TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Frederick Community College
Georgia Perimeter Community College
Holyoke Community College
John Wood Community College
Madison Area Technical College
Middlesex Community College
Moraine Valley Community College
Santa Fe Community College
Tomball College

NASPA

ncsd NATIONAL COUNCIL ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

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Special Community College Edition

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF NASPA AND NCSD

We are delighted that NASPA and NCSD have collaborated together to produce this joint publication that highlights both vision and exemplary practice in community colleges.

Community colleges provide access to higher education for millions of students and serve a critical need for students of all ages as they pursue further education. Both NASPA and NCSD understand the important role community colleges play within higher education, and we are pleased to showcase the very best vision and practice in community colleges today.

NASPA—the leading voice for Student Affairs administration, policy and practice in higher education—and NCSD—an affiliate council with the American Association of Community Colleges and the only organization of its kind to focus exclusively on student development in community colleges—extend a special note of thanks to the five leaders who contributed their thoughts and vision to this publication, along with heartfelt congratulations to those selected to feature their exemplary practice programs. We are pleased to be able to recognize the excellent work community colleges perform in serving students and offering high-quality education. ■

Karen L. Pennington
NASPA President

Frank Babcock
NCSD President

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS

This special community college edition of Bridges to Student Success is the culmination of a long-standing partnership between NASPA and NCSD. Both organizations have worked together over the years to showcase the important role of student services within the community college and to highlight the creative initiatives at the core of the community college mission.

The once clear distinctions between community college students and those enrolled at four-year colleges and universities are becoming increasingly blurred as greater numbers of adults, commuters and first-generation college students are enrolling in higher education. In addition, students today are more fluid in their college experiences than ever before, often accumulating credits at several institutions as well as through online courses. Our community college colleagues have years of experience in working with such students, and their best practices can provide a model for all of us to adapt and utilize in our own professional environment.

This publication describes some of the very best in vision and practice within community colleges today. We have invited five community college leaders, many of whom began their careers in student affairs, to describe their vision of the community college of the future and to give their advice for those working in the student services field. These leaders address common themes such as personal service, the integration of technology and the importance of outcome measurement as central to the future of student services in the community college setting.

These very themes emerge in the exemplary programs featured here. From specialized student services to programs that incorporate technology, these programs truly are on the cutting edge of exemplary practice in community colleges. We hope they inspire you to enhance the work you do everyday as you strive to improve the student experience. ■

Gwendolyn Jordan Dungy
NASPA Executive Director

Evelyn Clements
NCSD President-elect

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INTRODUCTION

Community colleges address a broad and varied array of educational, social and economic needs. With strong incentives to undertake an increasing number of missions and functions, community colleges have evolved into complex institutions. However, regardless of their characteristics or specific goals, students depend upon community colleges for accessible, high-quality, low-cost instruction.

Community colleges carry out a variety of activities. Students may require remediation in basic academic and work skills, instruction in English as a second language, or training in technological and workplace skills to transition from the academic to the workplace environment. Furthermore, they may wish to receive their education from a distance, without being at a particular place at a particular time. Many community colleges also provide continuing education and enrichment programs to members of the community. Institutions may help students develop small businesses, or they may operate job-training programs to assist in securing employment.

Community colleges must also serve a diverse set of constituencies. Many students are non-traditional: they are enrolled on a part-time basis, or have interrupted their studies or changed institutions. Some have delayed their first-time entry into college, while others have enrolled to prepare for a four-year bachelor's degree.

With such a variety of students and goals, a community college must coordinate various campus-wide, departmental and staff efforts. Cooperation and coordination require an investment of resources and significant commitment on the part of institutional leadership. The community colleges highlighted in this report have successfully coordinated their efforts to develop award-winning, exemplary programs to meet the needs of their students.

In the first section of this report you will find interviews with five community college leaders. Not surprisingly, their observations highlight some of the themes you will see in the program descriptions that follow: the need to work closely with students during the crucial first semester; the effective and creative use of technology to assess basic skills, develop computerized education plans, provide strong counseling and advising support, convey college information, and enhance the college experience; strong connections between the college and the outside world, including businesses; the use of private funds; the powerful role that student services can play in helping students achieve their goals; and the diversity of the student body.

Of all the elements of a successful program, perhaps the two that emerge as most important for a positive outcome are (1) cooperation among staff and faculty across traditional boundaries, including the customary divisions of student services and instruction and (2) establishing a sense of student engagement and connectedness —with the college, other students, faculty and staff members, and the subject matter they are studying.

BIOGRAPHIES

WALTER BUMPHUS

Dr. Bumphus is President of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, which governs the seven community colleges and 42 technical college campuses across the State of Louisiana. He has served in a variety of administrative positions, including President of Brookhaven College (TX) and Dean of Students at Howard Community College (MD). He has held positions as Chair of the Board of Directors of the American Association of Community Colleges and President of the National Council on Student Development.

PHIL DAY

Dr. Day is Chancellor of City College of San Francisco. He is a former community college student himself and has served as President of Daytona Beach Community College (FL), Cape Cod Community College (MA) and Dundalk Community College (MD). He has authored several books and journal articles, including a recent volume, with Dr. Bob McCabe, entitled "Remediation: A Social and Economic Imperative."

CORINA GARDEA

Dr. Gardea is President of Phoenix College (AZ). She began her career as a faculty member at El Paso Community College (TX) and has served in various administrative positions, including Vice President of Instruction and later Vice President of Student Development at Mountain View College (TX). Dr. Gardea has received numerous awards including, most recently, the Latino Pioneer Educators Excellence Award in Arizona, District I. She was raised on the Texas-Mexico border and is the first in her family to attend college.

JAMES HUDGINS

Dr. Hudgins is Executive Director of the South Carolina State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, serving 16 colleges across the state. He previously served for 13 years as President of Midlands Technical College in Columbia, SC and also as President of Central Carolina Technical College. He began his career as a counselor to students and later served as Dean of Student Services and then Vice President for Educational Affairs at Piedmont Technical College (SC).

KAY McCLENNEY

Dr. McClenney is Director of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and an adjunct faculty member in the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin. She has served as a community college faculty member, system administrator and interim CEO. A frequent keynote speaker, Dr. McClenney has authored numerous publications on education issues and received the 2002 PBS O'Banion Prize for contributions to teaching and learning in America. ■

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A VIEW FROM THE TOP:

Community college leaders look at the future of student services

Q. If you could imagine an exemplary, visionary community college in the year 2010, how would it be different from today's community college?

A. DAY: Well, I think community colleges are going to be much different in the future, and in large measure that's going to be a function of the students we serve. I think our students are becoming more sophisticated, more diverse and more knowledgeable about their expectations. In turn, they're becoming more demanding of our institutions, expecting them to deliver on the promise of helping them accomplish their goals and objectives. Community colleges pride themselves on being the peoples' colleges and now, with the shift in demographics, I think there's no institution better able to respond to these changes than the community college. There's also going to be more focus on community colleges demonstrating unequivocally that they are really, truly making a difference in students' lives. Already there are changes in the accreditation process, for example, more emphasis on student learning outcomes, and this focus will continue. Every element of the institution—including student services, faculty, board members and others—will need to demonstrate that they are active players in accomplishing the goal of having a positive effect on student outcomes. To a certain extent, what I see happening with the accreditation movement is that they're finally getting it right. They are really, truly focusing on what it is that we have always said we're about, which is to help students. I think this is about acknowledging and recognizing that the institutions we call community colleges are going to be about serving students and making a substantial contribution to improving their lives. That will really be the cornerstone of an exemplary community college, and of course, along with that is the effective use of technology to assess basic skills, develop computerized education plans, and provide strong counseling and advising support. We talk about building responsibility, but I think technology is really going to allow us to empower students to exercise that responsibility.

> "Every element of the institution—including student services, faculty, board members and others—will need to demonstrate that they are active players in accomplishing the goal of having a positive effect on student outcomes."

BUMPHUS: Well, I've thought about that one, and I actually don't view the community college of 2010 as a whole lot different. There will be a greater emphasis on the learning styles of students and there will be a greater use of technology, both in and out of the classroom. I see more emphasis being placed on students' abilities to access our colleges through the Internet and to receive services through the Net. In many communities, not everyone will come to our campuses. There will be something almost like the Starbucks concept, that is, offering your college services and programs around the community in almost every corner, in addition to your main location.

> "I see more emphasis being placed on students' abilities to access our colleges through the Internet and to receive services through the Net."

McCLENNEY: 'Visionary' means first of all that you need to have a vision, and then the college needs to use that vision to focus its effort and its resources. In the end, it's actually easy to have a vision; what is hard is to deliver it. What I find in short supply in community colleges these days is

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not really a lack of vision; it's a lack of focus and sometimes an unwillingness to establish clear priorities. To bring focus to the vision and to provide consistent, systematic, credible evidence of high-quality results is actually a fair distance from where most of us are right now. So what kind of results? My bias is that the results need to be about student success generally, but about student learning more particularly. The learning-centered institution is gaining a lot of press and credibility, and even some sense of 'movement' out there now, but there are important ways that a community college that is really, powerfully focused on learning differs from an ordinary good college. How? The focused colleges are very clear about what it is that students will know and be able to do as a result of their courses and their programs.

"In the end, it's actually easy to have a vision; what is hard is to deliver it. What I find in short supply in community colleges these days is not really a lack of vision; it's a lack of focus and sometimes an unwillingness to establish clear priorities."

GARDEA: In the future I would see stronger connections with the external community, for example, more integration with business, with workforce development and with the universities. Instead of just responding to our various constituents when they come to us, I think we need to continue the vertical alignment that you see happening already. I see that becoming stronger, more cohesive, more dynamic.

"In the future I would see stronger connections with the external community, for example, more integration with business, with workforce development and with the universities."

HUDGINS: As I look ahead, I think we're going to retain—I certainly hope we do—the core values of service to the community and student access. But the definition of the community college will change and expand, given the use of technology. The issue of access, too, is going to be an even greater challenge, with larger numbers of minorities, immigrants and international students. One of the areas in which I hope we will retain our distinctive mission relates to the growth of the four-year specialized programs. I think there will be many more of them; in fact, one is coming under discussion here in South Carolina. If these programs remain focused on the unique economic development thrust of the community college, then that's a good thing, but if they take on characteristics of becoming more like a senior college, it could be a great danger in terms of our mission. I'm sure that public funds are going to be less available in the year 2010 than they are today, and if that trend continues, there is going to be a greater dependence on private fund-raising, on our foundations, as well as an increase in entrepreneurial enterprises as a way to find new sources of funds. There will also be more integration with K-12 education, and that whole middle-college, dual credit issue will grow everywhere, along with the emphasis on national skill standards. There's going to be much more focus on competency as it relates to various certifications, which is going to lead, in my view, to the blurring of lines between continuing education and credit coursework. It will be a real challenge for faculty to deal with life experience and credit for skill standards. It's a lot for us to deal with, but I hope we can keep that core focus.

"There's going to be much more focus on competency as it relates to various certifications, which is going to lead, in my view, to the blurring of lines between continuing education and credit coursework."

Q. How will the role of student services fit into this new vision of the community college?

A. HUDGINS: Student services, in my review of their history, have led the way in so many activities, for example in assessment, tutoring, learning styles, enrollment management and diversity. So I see student services continuing to play that exploratory role. Student services of the future will be kind of an open service center where people with many different needs come in for support and services. I think that the greater diversity of students is going to make those follow-up services even more critical to student success, because most attrition occurs during that

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first semester, so encouraging student engagement early on may be one of the key roles of student services in the future.

> "...most attrition occurs during that first semester, so encouraging student engagement early on may be one of the key roles of student services in the future."

BUMPHUS: I spent about five years in the corporate world and I see a move toward customer service specialists. I'm almost envisioning something like a concierge position. If you go to Nordstrom's, you don't go to one place to buy your shirt and another to buy your socks; you have one customer service representative who handles that and then checks you out. From the student services viewpoint, I see one person who might be assigned to you for the whole year to be your personal representative for service, almost like your personal shopper or personal concierge.

McCLENNEY: In order to be focused on student success, we first need to understand who our students are, what they look like, what their challenges are and, in particular, what their goals are. We generally have a good understanding that our students come to us with highly varied goals. But there is, in my view, a renewed recognition of the importance of student advising in these times and of the powerful role that student advising can play in helping students achieve their goals. Our students have so many reasons not to come back to college on Monday morning, or next semester or next fall. If, through the advising process, we can give them a way to establish benchmarks for themselves, that gives them a reason to come back. The evidence is clear that these are powerful ways of retaining students and helping them achieve their goals. The roles of advising, assessment and placement, and the kinds of supports we provide for students who are at risk of not completing their goals, are very central to student services.

GARDEA: Student services needs to become a strong and equal partner in creating an excellent learning environment, going beyond what is supplemental or co-curricular and becoming part of the discussion about what we need to create for students—whether students are on campus, at a satellite center or online.

DAY: For years, in some organizations, student services played second fiddle to academic affairs. It's very important to have both a chief academic officer and a chief student affairs officer, with an equal reporting structure, and it's important that student services take its rightful seat at the front of the bus in terms of making sure that we are all collaborating and helping students navigate through the waters of a community college. So, in terms of the broader context, student services will be playing a key role in the future in terms of technology and increasing our capacity to serve students effectively.

Q. What are the major challenges that community colleges will face in the next decade? How will this affect student services?

A. McCLENNEY: The challenge I feel most passionate about is the absolute imperative for community colleges to focus on closing the gap in participation and attainment between white students and their African-American, Hispanic and Native American peers. I don't think there is anything more important for our colleges, or in fact, more important for our society over the next couple of decades. That means increasing completion and transfer rates. Even when we acknowledge that students come to the community college with a variety of goals, we also know that students don't receive the maximum benefit from a college education unless they graduate. The more we can do to help these students complete credentials, the more we are going to be serving both individual needs and the needs of our communities and states. That means that we're also going to have to transform our community college systems and services to meet the needs of what people are calling the "swirling" student population. The way people are going to college is just dramatically different in this century from what it was in the last century. What we know about the degree to which students stop in and stop out, go to one institution and then another institution, transfer back and forth, go to several institutions at the same time—all of that swirling around has real implications for advising and career counseling. It's almost like shopping in a supermarket. If they have a grocery basket full of educational experiences, who is it who helps them see how that adds up to something meaningful in terms of

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certification? Who is it who helps them find their next step in the educational or career development process? I think that the assessment and certification of learning is going to be an increasingly big piece of the business of community colleges and I really think that doing that is more likely to grow out of student services than out of the academic area.

"What we know about the degree to which students stop in and stop out, go to one institution and then another institution, transfer back and forth, go to several institutions at the same time—all of that 'swirling' around has real implications for advising and career counseling. It's almost like shopping in a supermarket."

HUDGINS: At least for our colleges in South Carolina, the number one question is how we can fulfill our mission of access and service and do it with quality, given the declining resources? At what point are you doing students a disservice by taking them in with too many adjuncts and being unable to provide those front-end services? Achieving our mission with quality is the number one challenge. Student services is often the area most affected by those cuts, but student services needs to demonstrate that it is indispensable in the role that it plays. Another big challenge is that we are facing competitors, including distance learning that is delivered by proprietaries. It takes a lot of money for us to stay competitive in technology. Another challenge is whether faculty members are going to be able to adapt to this flexible, entrepreneurial, customer-focused kind of relationship that will be essential to stay competitive. I guess finally the challenge is to prepare a whole new generation of leaders who need the orientation and commitment to make this vision of the future become a reality. Student services must become a greater player in that leadership team of the future because they bring qualities to leadership that fit the profile of the future leader.

DAY: It's difficult not to say the budgets. If you're involved with community colleges, no matter where you are, it always comes down to finances. Student services has always been the first place everyone looked at to try to balance the budget. Now I think that approach is going to be harder to justify. Community colleges will have to make the appropriate shifts to accommodate the growing diversity of our student body, not only in terms of ethnicity but also in terms of learning styles and other differences. No matter how much your budget is cut, the expectations don't change. We still need to take care of more students, and we still need to address the issue of remediation. Yet the reality is that we always remain the final safety net. We've got to embrace technology to try to figure out some creative ways that we can make technology work for us.

GARDEA: One challenge is growth. As the universities limit the size of their freshmen classes, that will cause community college cohorts to be larger. It's a good problem for us to have, but we have to manage that growth in terms of operating costs so that we're not putting the burden totally on the backs of students with tuition increases. The other challenge is K-12 public education. As public schools mainstream special education students, we need to be prepared to receive those students at the college level. The third challenge is keeping up with the new technology. There must be continual training for our staff, especially in student services. We need to stay well informed.

BUMPHUS: This one really concerns me. I think we're all going to be facing funding challenges. Enrollments are increasing, and unfortunately one of the first areas to get cut is the student services operation. When I was in the corporate world and we had a bad quarter, we increased our customer services. I'm finding the exact opposite to be true in community colleges. In many states, the vice president of student services has gone the way of the dinosaur; you don't find him/her. We're missing the boat here. We talk about having learning colleges, and learning occurs in more than just the classroom. If we're truly going to be learning colleges and meet the needs of the students, we must have professionals, and I emphasize student services professionals, to

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assist students. That's what I consider to be the major challenge of the future.

Q. If you were a chief student affairs officer at a community college today, what would be your priorities for the next few years?

A. HUDGINS: There would be several priorities. I would network with the academic unit and study the marketplace so that you are changing and trying to adapt to change rather than getting zapped or left behind by it. I would try to increase the application of technology to the student services unit. If I were a student services officer, developing current staff and recruiting new staff would be priorities of mine. And finally, I would broker this whole idea of student engagement and collaborative learning. Those are the areas that will improve retention and student learning, and the student services unit knows how to lead in those areas.

McCLENNEY: For me the first priority would be closing the gap between minority students and their Caucasian peers. The gap is unacceptable and it endangers our future. From the student services perspective, there needs to be significant and aggressive outreach into underserved communities. It means strengthening collaboration with K-12 counselors and others in the public schools; it means mandatory assessment and placement upon entry; and it means vastly strengthening support for students in developmental education, including tutoring, financial aid, advising, early academic warning systems and so on. It's not that these things are new to community colleges, it is that the more we look at the data about the effectiveness of our developmental education programs, the more we know we have to do better. I think that for student affairs people the data also suggest that it's important to place major emphasis on the front door of the colleges. The students we lose, we lose early, during the first weeks or first semester of their experience. We need to look carefully at how we work with students from the very first moment they come into contact with us through the first 15 semester hours of their experience. If we can get them through the first semester, the likelihood of their succeeding and graduating is very high.

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GARDEA: One priority would be to make sure that staffing is at an adequate level, and that training is current, so we can serve students. If I were a chief student affairs officer, I would be at the table and a strong contributor to discussions with my colleagues in instruction and administrative services about learning communities and how to create optimal learning environments, both inside and outside the classroom.

BUMPHUS: I would become a part of the whole learning revolution by finding a better way to use technology, and I would document the contribution of my respective area in a data-driven way. I don't think student services has done that, which is why they have constantly been cut over the years. We need to quantify the contributions of student services.

"We need to quantify the contributions of student services."

DAY: My priorities would be to get my division to do everything it can to take a leadership role within the organization, set the tone for creating a climate for student success, develop institution-wide strategies to reduce attrition, and make sure the college environment is re-engineered so that we really operationalize the notion of students first. Nobody can do that better than the student services leadership.

Q. As a president or chancellor of a community college, what would be your expectations for a chief student affairs officer?

A. GARDEA: My expectations would be that the chief student affairs officer play a key role in

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creating a positive culture for the college, whether it's through distance learning or on campus. I think it's important that in this day of diversity, the chief student affairs officers make it a point in their talks and in their conversations to honor the strengths of everyone. I would want a chief student affairs officer to help the campus pause and celebrate the fact that our students have made it to our doors. When you look at the huge obstacles and risks that students face in school today, from their high school experience—a lot of them face major risks just riding on the bus across town to get to the college—or their experiences with poverty or family issues, whatever it is, they have made it here, and we need to celebrate that and help them move forward.

> "I would want a chief student affairs officer to help the campus pause and celebrate the fact that our students have made it to our doors . . . we need to celebrate that and help them move forward."

HUDGINS: I would want him or her to be a pioneer, an explorer and a dreamer; in other words, a leader instead of a manager. I'd want that person to be a networker across the institution, and to have influence, to be respected, not just as one who solves student problems, but also as an educational leader. I'd want the chief student affairs officer to be an advocate for student success, not in the old sense of just defending individual students until you become an annoyance, but a true advocate who can represent the student in a college setting where the faculty members often get priority treatment.

BUMPHUS: I want a chief student affairs officer to come up with solutions that really help to make a difference for students outside the classroom, and to work with faculty as partners right in the classroom.DAY: That person has to set the tone, provide true leadership and be seen as a leader. The most important question in hiring a CSAO is, "Does this person have the ability to provide substantive, high quality leadership and can he or she positively affect an institution so that student issues become the central element on our radar screen?" That issue is more important than curriculum; it fits very nicely with what our business is and what our core mission is.

McCLENNEY: My expectations would be that this individual focus on retention and completion rates and also see to it that there are no gaps in attainment across students groups in terms of gender, age, race and ethnicity. I think that requires very significant skills in working across the traditional boundaries at community colleges, including the traditional divisions of student services and instruction, credit and non-credit and so forth. The skills in working across those boundaries are exceedingly important.

Q. What advice do you have for those working in the student services field at a community college today?

A. McCLENNEY: The first thing I think about when I hear that question is that free advice is very often worth what you pay for it. But that said, I would say the first thing for me is learn to love data and become a data-driven decision-maker. In community colleges, we're very often so busy doing the work and trying to help students that we don't pay enough attention to ways of understanding how well we're doing what we think we're doing. One of the most powerful questions you can ask consistently is, "How does this thing, whatever it is, strengthen student learning and student success?" Then the next powerful question is, "How do we know? How do we really know?" We make all kinds of assertions in community colleges about how good we are and how successful our programs are, and the real question is, "How do we know?" So, that's my first piece of advice. The second one is to pay attention to the front door of the college, as I mentioned before, because there are very powerful improvements we can attain in our results if we carefully focus our attention and resources on what happens to students during the first 15 credit hours of their experience with the college. Thirdly, I would suggest that student services people have a great contribution to make in continuing to bring the developmental perspective to the college's work, particularly in defining student learning outcomes and appropriate ways to assess outcomes. You know, learning outcomes are a big deal for accreditation, but it's really important to remember what learning is like in human beings. It's a developmental process, something sometimes lost on us in this work. And finally, I would emphasize the

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importance of student engagement. As you know, I'm the director of the Community College Survey on Student Engagement, and the reason we focus on student engagement is because the research is unequivocal. The more students are engaged, connected to the college, to one another, to their faculty members, to the subject matter they are studying, the more likely they are to be successful and the more likely they are to stay in college. So, it's important to understand that and to look at ways that we can engage students. It's also important to be very realistic about where and how that engagement is likely to occur with the kinds of students we have. For example, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement documents that students have many competing obligations—jobs, families, community obligations and so on. Eighty percent of community college students never participate in extracurricular activities. Never. That's a pretty powerful number. Then you look at other data that clearly shows that the classroom, at least the course-defined experience, is our best opportunity for getting to these students. And so, that suggests a lot about what faculty members do in their classroom and whom they invite in from student services and other areas. It also has implications for the kinds of assignments they give to students, the things they require students to do beyond the doors of the classroom—assignments intentionally designed to promote interactions with the campus and with other students. This might include group projects, service learning projects and the like. The focus needs to be on activities that will cause students to connect.

"...the research is unequivocal. The more students are engaged, connected to the college, to one another, to their faculty members, to the subject matter they are studying, the more likely they are to be successful and the more likely they are to stay in college."

HUDGINS: Here's my list: I would encourage student services people to get their doctorate; to develop a horizontal and global view of the institution; to understand the theories of learning, continuing education, corporate training and technology. I'd encourage them to develop a network of other administrators in areas outside of their own so they can learn how other units work. And finally, engage a president or other leader in a significant mentoring relationship.

GARDEA: Number one, you have to have a passion for the work. If you don't feel that passion, then maybe student services is not the best role for you and you need to make a change. Second, recognize the key role we play in molding students' lives—whether you tell them about a leadership opportunity, or employ them as college work-study students or just smile at them and say, "You can do it." We can touch people's lives in a way that will have a significant impact either positively or negatively, and we shouldn't take that responsibility lightly. The other critical role that student services personnel play is to train faculty—we really do teach them about the shared role we have in molding students' lives.

DAY: I always ask people, deans and administrators, what they want to do. When I look around at who the college CEOs are today, I hope the vice presidents of student affairs will do a gut-check about aspiring to that level. Student services professionals believe in what they are doing, they know how important students are, and they need to realize they are capable of moving to the position of CEO. They bring terrific skills to the table.

BUMPHUS: Continue to learn as much as you can about the college. Student services professionals have a holistic view of the student's experience, but with that, be sure to be able to quantify what you do. We can't speak in anecdotal terms about our contributions to the college. We've got to be able to provide information, in very succinct and data-driven terms, about how those contributions are made. ■

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Moraine Valley Community College

Moraine Valley Community College

"At first I was extremely upset that I had to waste my Monday afternoons in a small, stuffy classroom talking about things that I had learned in seventh grade. Boy did you prove me wrong. I learned new skills that will help me throughout my entire college experience and the rest of my life."

–Pamela Venz,
SOAR and COL-101 participant

Professor Carolyn Manley, Counselor, and Shomaila Sheikh, Student Orientation Peer, and another student

The First-Semester Student Experience

OBJECTIVES

Designed to help students with a successful transition to the college environment, the program begins by ensuring that students begin classes at a level at which they can succeed.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Everyone who indicates the intention of attending college full-time must complete the Computerized Assessment of Basic Reading, Writing and Math Skills (COMPASS). COMPASS is offered on a walk-in basis throughout the year, with extended hours during registration periods. Students with appropriate American College Testing (ACT) scores or previous college credit may use their scores in place of COMPASS. Students must register for classes according to their placement results.

After basic assessment, students are invited to attend the half-day, small group Student Orientation and Registration (SOAR) taught by a team of counselors and academic advisors. Focused on preparing students for the first semester of college, SOAR includes informational sessions and small group discussions encompassing the expectations of higher education, educational planning, review of placement test scores, introduction to the online SOAR Web site (including online registration tools), and individual help with course selection and registration. Students who participate in SOAR complete an online inventory that assesses what they have learned through the program. Students can review the information and are encouraged to return to the Web site for more information on policies, procedures and academic programs throughout their time at the college.

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The centerpiece of the First-Semester Student Experience is a one semester hour course called "College: Changes, Challenges, Choices" (COL-101). A campus-wide task force including faculty and administrators developed the curriculum and continues its involvement to ensure the success of the course. COL-101 seeks to enhance student development and learning and to improve student retention and academic success. The course, with a maximum enrollment of 22 students per section, focuses on issues that new college students face and provides continuing peer and instructor support during the critical first semester. The course introduces resources available to help students throughout their time in college. For example, college librarians teach one session of the course, focusing on information literacy and helping students assess and evaluate resources available in print and online.

Faculty and administrators across the college teach COL-101. All instructors must have earned a master's degree. Before teaching the course for the first time, they must complete a five-hour training session, taught by the assistant dean of new student retention, with support from the counseling faculty and other members of the COL-101 staff.

Each student develops an individualized Master Academic Plan (MAP), a process that is integrated into the COL-101 course. To develop a MAP, students participate in educational planning sessions taught by academic advisors. There they learn about available resources and get help to determine the educational requirements for their intended college major and career. Students also learn how to register for the second semester.

FUNDING

The program is funded through the regular institutional budget. Students pay a fee for placement testing, tuition and fees for the COL-101 course.

Biggest Challenge: Offering enough sections of the COL-101 course for the increasing number of freshmen over the last few years. COL-101 course offerings have doubled in the last year.

Key Ingredient: The college-wide commitment by faculty and staff, in coordination with the assistant dean of new student retention, a service that helps new students adapt to higher education. More than 140 faculty and administrators have participated in the required instructor training session. More than 100 have taught the course at least one time and most have taught several sections.

Paula Adduci, Professor and Counselor, and Sonja Blades, student

RESULTS

During the first two years, approximately 4,900 students participated in the First-Semester Student Experience. In the fall of 2002 there were 105 sections of the course taught, with nearly 2,300 students enrolled.

The Office of Institutional Research followed-up with the first cohort of students in fall 2000. Students who had successfully completed COL-101 during their first semester earned higher cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) at the end of their first semester (average = 2.75) and second semester (average = 2.56) than their peers who had not enrolled in or successfully completed the course. Successful COL-101 students also enrolled for more credit hours during their first semester (average = 86 percent completion rate) and were more likely to continue their enrollment to the second semester (91 percent continued) and to the second year (77 percent continued). More follow-up research is planned.

Students evaluate their experiences at the end of the various program components, specifically at the end of the SOAR program and the COL-101 course.Through the program, students develop a better understanding of their role as partners in the educational experience. They develop collaborative, supportive learning relationships with fellow students and instructors. The program also allows instructors to discover students' needs. The First-Semester Student Experience allows the college to assess student needs on a continuing basis and to revise programs to ensure a positive effect on student learning, student development and student success. ■

Georgia Perimeter College.

Georgia Perimeter College

"Keep the workshop going!"

"It was a big help."

"Thanks for everything and you made us all feel welcome."

–workshop participants

Navigating the Academic Waters Workshop participants

Navigating the Academic Waters Workshop

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this program is to improve retention, decrease class withdrawal rates and improve academic progress.

The typical student at Georgia Perimeter College is female (64 percent), minority (74 percent) and non-traditional (26.2 years old). The students epitomize an at-risk population; sixty-one percent attend college on a part-time basis, many hold full- or part-time jobs and more than one-fourth require remediation in the basic skills of English, reading and math. Interruption of five-years or more in their formal education, belonging to a racial or ethnic minority and having English as a second language can also categorize them as at risk.

Each year about 25 percent have significant academic difficulty, ranging from warning or probation to exclusion from school. About 30 percent of first-time freshmen drop out of school during or after the first semester. Although the college previously committed staff and financial resources to the problem, there had been little change prior to the institution of the program.

As in many two-year colleges, the student population does not know what to expect from college and it is difficult to motivate students to attend a full day of sessions. On-campus orientations had been reduced to three hours—half the original time—in response to student demands. In 2001, the academic challenges facing a large segment of the student population provided the impetus for developing an innovative three-day workshop for first-time freshmen.

Motivated by the desire to successfully introduce students to the collegiate environment and working under the premise that faster is not always

better, a group of counselors and faculty collaborated to design the Navigating the Academic Waters Workshop. It was created to be a variation on the standard orientation experience and an experiment in improving retention by informing students of policies, procedures and available services. The program was intended to help participants create stronger connections with other students as well as with faculty and staff members on campus.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The staff of the Advising and Counseling Center took the lead role in developing the workshop; however, a committee comprised of faculty and professional staff representing all areas of the campus shared their input. The student government association, campus committees, administrators and faculty expressed their approval.

Originally the program was designed to cover distinct topics over a three-day period; however, it became clear that the subject area lines could not be rigidly separated. The topics were then worked into the program as a whole in order to keep participants actively involved and accommodate logistical requirements and speaker schedules. The topics covered include exploration of the campus; self-exploration of goals, values and careers/program of study choices; study skills development; academic policy; academic information specific to student type; individual advising sessions with an academic advisor; and registration for classes.

In 2002 the committee shortened the length of the day to 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) and the presentations to 45 minutes (from one hour) to give students adequate breaks between sessions. The 2002 program involved more faculty than the year before and the 2003 workshop will include new sessions such as Safety on Campus and a parent/family session on what to expect from your student.

FUNDING

Support came from part of a grant to the campus from the University Board of Regents. Initially, participants were asked to pay a $15 nonrefundable registration fee. In 2002, most of the funding came from the student government association and a $25 registration fee. The funds were spent on food for workshop participants and materials to enhance the navigating theme, such as brochures, name tags, academic planners, T-shirts and printed materials organized in notebooks.

Biggest Challenge: Scheduling the workshop components. Program designers had an ideal time and day in mind but found that with summer school still in session it was necessary to make adjustments, especially as the program grew. This past year, with 49 students registered, it was necessary to have two sessions.

Key Ingredient: The wonderful faculty and staff who collaborated to make the program successful. From the planning stages through the execution and evaluation of the workshop, all of the departments—academic, student services, support services, financial services, food services, and plant services—worked together.

Program participants

RESULTS

Assessment of the workshop is performed on a daily basis. At the end of each of the first two days, participants indicated the best and worst parts of the program on a 3x5-inch card. At the end of the third day they each completed an in-depth survey. Faculty and staff were also asked to evaluate the program.

Participants in the 2001 workshop had a 90 percent retention rate compared to a 70 percent retention rate among non-participants. Participants' grade point average (GPA) was 2.58 compared to a GPA of 2.23 among non-participants. But the greatest success was in retention; in comparison with non-participants, who had a 35 percent class withdrawal rate, participants had a three percent withdrawal rate. The committee is currently tracking the 42 participants of the 2002 program. Evaluation of this experience will guide the development of the 2003 program. ■

TOMBALL COLLEGE
A NORTH HARRIS MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Tomball College

"It was great!"

–from a student on probation—close to suspension—who earned a 3.6 grade point average after completing the camp

Camp "Of Course You Can!" participants from 2000

Camp "Of Course You Can!"

OBJECTIVES

At-risk students were invited to participate in Camp "Of Course You Can!" to strengthen their retention and success rates.

Several categories of students are defined as at risk:

- students returning to school after an extended absence,
- students needing two or more developmental classes,
- students with GEDs in place of a high school diploma,
- students on academic probation or suspension,
- and students otherwise determined to be at high risk for dropping out.

The program provides a package of services to engage students with college personnel and to encourage student commitment that increases success in college.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Camp "Of Course You Can!," launched in 1997, incorporates three elements essential to the success of the college student: intellectual challenges, the opportunity for participation and the correct level of support.

The week before classes start, sessions meet Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to noon. Faculty and staff, who are back on campus for in-service week, volunteer to lead sessions where they have expertise. Representatives from student organizations also participate as session leaders. Organizers developed a manual that emphasizes skills needed for college success and uses information and material collected over the years from a variety of sources.

Camp "Of Course You Can!" participants from 1999

After the sessions that form the bulk of the program, the camp day ends with a challenge to the students. The first day's challenge is always a treasure hunt which familiarizes students with campus resources, thereby eliminating another barrier to success. Other challenges focus on math, reading or writing skills. Challenges are designed to be fun and, as a result, students respond to them positively. By the end of the program, campers have met 20 or more people on campus who care about them, creating another factor which leads to student success. All Student Life Center personnel are involved in the camp. Session leaders volunteer their time after camp to continue as new student mentors.

FUNDING

Initial funding came from the Carl Perkins Vocation grant. After the program proved its effectiveness, the college institutionalized it. Camp manuals cost about $15 each for printing and binding. Brochures and posters cost about $200 and shirts cost $20 each. Faculty and guests donate their time and talents to lead the sessions.

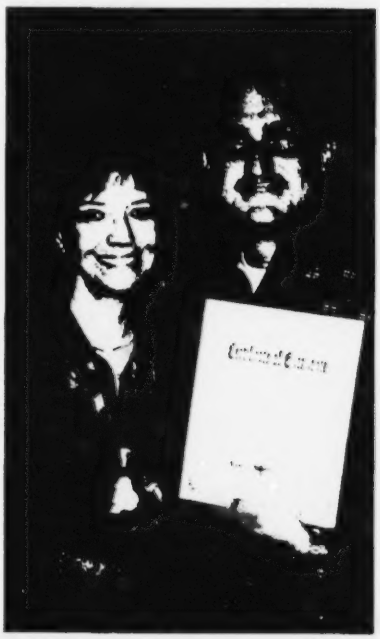
Participating students pay $200 or commit to 20 hours ($10/hour) of service time. Service leadership opportunities are based on personal preference and skills. For example, a student may host events with high school students on campus, work at a job fair or help with college night. For instance, one student interested in theatre ran a spotlight for a theatre production. Another musically talented student played piano for receptions on campus. Yet another helped the outdoor learning professor plan and conduct trips for his classes. Both instructors and campers benefit from these service hours.

Biggest Challenge: Motivating students to commit 15 hours of their personal time before classes begin to prepare for school.

Key Ingredient: The Been There, Done That session with which each camp day begins. This session includes simple testimonials from a current student who has faced similar challenges but has overcome them to reach his or her goal. These stories, some of them from former campers, have a huge impact on the students.

RESULTS

Since the camp targeted students at risk for not finishing the first semester, the college performed a quantitative analysis of completion rates for the next semester. Results have been positive. From 1997 through 2001 139 students completed the program. Eight did not complete the fall semester for personal and health-related reasons. Overall, the data indicates a retention rate between 85 and 90 percent. Skills students learn in camp increase their self-confidence and leadership skills. Furthermore, the teamwork and problem-solving skills they learn help them in both their academic and personal lives. ■

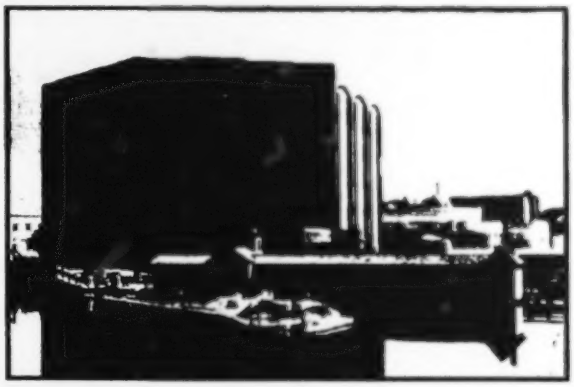


Jadi Johnson, counselor, and Matt Bice, a camper who earned the "Above and Beyond Award" for his contributions to the program.

Middlesex Community College

"The question administrators should be asking faculty is not 'Why are you losing so many students?' but 'How are you keeping so many?'"

~from a non-faculty staff member participant



Middlesex Community College's Lowell campus

Collaborative Intervention Teams Program (CITM) for at-risk students

OBJECTIVES

- Increase collaboration between faculty and student development staff
- Develop outreach to engage students with support services and staff as early as possible—reach students before crises develop and engage students who do not seek services
- Improve course completion rate

In the mid-1990s data from several consecutive years showed that the attrition rate for students in developmental courses was much higher than for students in standard college-level courses. Many were dropping out, either officially or unofficially. In many courses, especially developmental ones, the student attrition rate approached 50 percent.

Many of the students reported that they had family problems or issues such as court appointments, financial concerns, car problems or overwhelming personal issues that conflicted with class attendance and academic progress.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

In 1998, representatives from the Student Development, Academic Affairs, Academic Resources, and Institutional Planning and Research Divisions engaged in a year-long discussion about the concept of the program. The Collaborative Intervention Teams Program (CITM) for at-risk students was first piloted in the spring 1999 semester with five participating teams (two in writing and three in math) and has continued every semester since, with the number of teams ranging from three to eight.

A collaborative intervention team is generally a group of three individuals: a faculty member, a student development staff member and an academic tutor. The student development staff member spends time in and out of the classroom. The academic tutor provides additional in-class assistance when appropriate. Faculty participants have been mainly from the English and Math departments, but may include other departments. Since 1999 a total of 35 faculty and staff have participated, thirteen for three or more semesters.

Procedures were more prescribed in the first semesters of the program. Subsequently teams decided that they wanted the freedom to create their own assessment tools and interventions. The collaboration model now varies greatly from team to team, depending on the group's wishes and composition. However, one consistent requirement is that all student development staff must attend at least four class sessions per semester.

Teams use intervention strategies to address the themes of early awareness of problems, student assessment of study skills and learning style, and the promotion of connections—among students, with the team and with the college community. Strategies for increasing connections include individual classroom assistance, study groups with refreshments outside of class, student journal readings and responses, and topical workshops.

FUNDING

The CITP was created and is sustained by voluntary (invited) participation. No additional funding is needed.

Biggest Challenge: There are several.

The first challenge is recruitment of staff, faculty and tutors. Since the chemistry of the team is a key component in the success of the program, the selection and matching of team members is a challenge. A student may participate in subsequent semesters, with the same team or a new team. In times of state budget shortfalls, hiring freezes, and increased faculty and professional staff workloads, it is often difficult to recruit new participants.

The second challenge has been assessment of the program. Quantitative methods have not adequately measured the success of the CITP. They have shown the positive impact of the program on students and faculty/staff. The college wants to employ additional creative assessment methods including pre- and post-tests, a longitudinal study of students who have been a part of the program and student focus groups.

The third and perhaps greatest challenge is a result of the many factors in students' lives that make academic success extremely difficult. Even with the highest levels of support, students cannot always overcome family problems, financial woes, childcare issues and transportation problems. We consider it a success even if a student has to withdraw from a Collaborative Teams class section, because we know that student received extra support, care and advice. The college hopes that because of the connection felt with the team, the student will return to the college when the time is right.

Key Ingredient: The dedication, creativity and enthusiasm of each team. Students, and ultimately all participants, appreciate this chemistry.

RESULTS

Initial assessments were both quantitative and qualitative. Course completion rates in the 1999 study were the same in English sections but five percent greater in collaborative math sections than in the matched non-collaborative sections. The number of students who enrolled in spring 1999 sections and who re-enrolled in fall 1999 was nine percent greater for collaborative team students than those in non-collaborative sections.

While data collected for spring 1999 was promising, more recent results did not duplicate the previous positive outcomes and there were no significant differences between collaborative and non-collaborative sections. However, the qualitative data collected over the years have consistently provided positive results. The college plans to design a pre-and post-intervention questionnaire.

Staff members who participate in the teams have become more aware of the day-to-day challenges of teaching. One of the greatest benefits of the Collaborative Intervention Teams is the support and connections developed between staff and faculty. ■

Holyoke Community College

"Being referred to a counselor from Financial Aid Appeals was good for me. Otherwise I would have dropped out of school and hidden in my room."

"Getting help has always been a last resort. I always try to do it all myself. This process has helped me to learn that I can't do everything by myself, and that it is OK to have help sometimes."

~students who participated in the program

Teams meet regularly to review student files.

Financial Aid Appeals Retention Model

OBJECTIVES

The principal purpose is to improve student retention and reduce the number of repeat appeals. Additional objectives are to introduce students to counseling and support programs; provide structure to the financial aid appeals process and an organized and more formal approach to referrals for intervention and support; and emphasize tracking, enforcement of conditions and feedback from the referrals.

As many as 800 students in one semester were required by Federal Financial Aid guidelines to file an unsatisfactory academic progress appeal and were in danger of losing their financial aid. Students are required to appeal because of repeated withdrawals, poor grades, grades of incomplete or too many credits attempted. The College Financial Aid Appeals Committee found that many of these appeals could have been avoided had appropriate interventions been made. Students needed to be more conscious of the various types of support available to them—academic advising, learning services and counseling—and of the fact that they are required to take advantage of them as a condition of their appeal approval.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Upon receiving the appeal, the student is encouraged to meet with a member of the Financial Aid Appeals Committee, which is organized under the Student Development Division and administered through the Financial Aid Office. The financial aid senior staff assistant heads the committee.

The student must prepare a response to the notice of appeal of unsatisfactory academic progress. If the student has attempted at least 36 semester hours, he or she must see an advisor or college counselor to develop a plan

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to complete graduation requirements. The plan must be attached to the appeal when the Committee team meets to perform the review. During the review, the team examines the following:

- What problems caused the student to make unsatisfactory academic progress?
- Is there a plan to address the previous problems or have theme problems been resolved?
- Did the student follow the special conditions on a previous appeal?
- Is there a practical semester-by-semester plan to complete the degree?

If the appeal is approved, the student must follow special conditions and comply with a detailed referral. Some or all of the following may be included:

- Personal counseling and problem solving
- Career counseling
- Detecting early warning signs
- Petitioning for grade changes
- Developing a study plan
- Accessing services
- Planning for regular check-ins and follow-up
- Scheduling or course changes

The Committee indicates that "failure to abide by any special condition indicated in this letter may be grounds for denial of any future appeal."

FUNDING

The program has no additional funding. The committee is made up of regular college staff members, who are assigned to the committee for one to three terms, and a financial aid senior staff member is placed in charge. This spring, there are 20 professional staff members divided into three different teams: the Academic Plan Team, the Triage Team and three Academic Progress Committee Teams.

Biggest Challenge: Timing

The busiest time for appeals is also the busiest for the department. The most intense need to review appeals coincides with educational planning for new students, just before the start of the semester. Fall grades are posted the week after December 25; this must happen before deciding who will be notified of the need to appeal for the spring semester. Since the spring semester begins in the last week of January, there are only four weeks in which to issue notices, allow for responses and review appeals.

Key Ingredient: Early intervention

With new federal guidelines in place, appeals are now reviewed every semester. The program is therefore able to intervene early. This is critical to student retention and success. The college is able to help students get on the right track in their academic programs early enough to make a difference.

RESULTS

Students involved in this process displayed academic progress and an improved completion rate. Out of 39 participants, 62 percent showed an increase in grade point average (GPA) in the year following intervention. In the fall of 2001, the completion rate for all students was 74 percent; for the financial aid participating appellants it was 67 percent. This is remarkable considering their high-risk academic status. Evaluation of the current group is currently in progress. ■

A counselor meets with a student to review her plan.

Madison Area Technical College

"I feel at ease and have some ideas about what to do about my situation now."

–from an emotionally distraught student who had reportedly been falsely accused of cheating by his instructor in front of his classmates

The Madison Area Technical College Conflict Management Services team, from left to right, Back row: Geraldo VilaCruz, Counselor; Jackye Thomas, Director of Counseling and CMS; Patricia Olson, Administrative Assistant; Gerard Xavier, Counselor; Katherine Wilkinson, Counselor. Front row: Todd Jones, Disability Resource Specialist; Rocio Martinez, Counselor

Conflict Management Services (CMS)

OBJECTIVES

The college desired a program and a service to educate and support all members of the campus community in the area of conflict resolution. Students had been filing many conflict-related complaints prematurely. This required far too much processing time and, more importantly, precluded more desirable resolution methods. The college wanted to promote informal processes that work toward mutually beneficial or "win-win" solutions. The program would support student development and strengthen student retention. It would also encourage student growth and discourage educational derailment.

Specifically the program seeks to:

- promote student success by helping students learn conflict management skills (emphasizing communication, assertiveness and decision-making) in order to work through conflicts without prematurely resorting to formal grievance procedures or withdrawing from difficult situations;
- increase campus community members' knowledge of conflict management strategies;
- handle conflicts in a fair and reasonable way;
- and promote awareness of and respect for college policies and procedures.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The program has been operating since April of 2000. Conflict Management Services (CMS) offers assistance when conflicts occur—between individuals or within groups—through a variety of services and resources including counseling, consultation, mediation, crisis prevention intervention, books

and videos. The director of CMS reports to the executive dean of student development and success. The CMS staff can help with conflicts such as student code of conduct issues, grading disagreements, interpersonal conflicts, discrimination/harassment allegations and non-academic student grievances.

The program may use informal conflict management (to resolve issues on the basis of actions and decisions involving the parties in the conflict) and formal conflict management (to resolve issues using an authorized, neutral third party to review the matter and make a decision about subsequent outcomes or consequences).

Staff members are assigned on a rotating basis to an on-call pager system to handle individual student emergencies. Conflicts are recorded on a standardized form. Staff throughout the campus may resolve conflicts on their own but can centralize records in the CMS office, allowing the office to track repeated problems and patterns throughout the college.

CMS works with security personnel, as needed, and offers a variety of program training, workshops and presentations throughout the year. The one-hour training program acquaints participants with CMS. There is a six-hour training course for those who have been or may be called to serve on a hearing board to adjudicate student cases. A one-and-a-half- to two-hour workshop instructs participants on harassment issues. A two-hour session is for those who want to learn how to mediate conflicts as a neutral third party. A six-hour training program teaches techniques to give participants the confidence to handle most violent episodes. The program offers a session on a team response to crisis situations. It offers another session on guidelines and practices for documenting incidents. There is training to learn how to personalize response plans to crisis situations. A workshop refines mediation skills. Various sessions train individuals who have been selected to serve on the Judiciary Review Board. Presentations address such additional issues as security on campus, suicide risk assessment and intervention, and confidentiality. CMS facilitates brown bag discussions related to managing conflict.

FUNDING

The counseling and guidance budget is the sole funding source for the program.

Biggest Challenge: Getting faculty to understand that the college's role is to facilitate the resolution of conflicts, not to act as student advocates. The college emphasizes acting as "advocates for the process."

Key Ingredient: Talented staff strive for a mutually beneficial, "win-win," process. The service is located in counseling facilities to provide access to appropriate interventions when needed.

RESULTS

Each presentation, training or workshop is followed by participant evaluation. Last year, 80 cases were referred for service—58 by students and 22 by faculty. Of these cases, 62 were resolved informally (through mediation or other means), 8 were resolved formally (via the Judicial Review Board, the Academic Appeals Committee and other sources), and 10 were resolved outside of the service and reported to the program for tracking purposes. ■

Madison Area staff and students participate in a mock hearing.

SANTA FE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Sante Fe Community College

"It's very reliable. You can only vote once, you can only vote for one person, and it's quick."

~a student who used the system

The polling location set-up outside the campus library on election days. Luis Baez, Student Government Election Commissioner, assists first year student Darren Clark.

Online Student Government Elections

OBJECTIVES

Historically, student government elections in colleges and universities attract low voter turnout. Participation is particularly poor at community colleges, with a turnout of five percent considered excellent. At Sante Fe Community College, with a campus population of about 12,000, 420 students or three-and-a-half percent participated in the spring of 2000.

College officials wanted to engage student interest and investigated the idea of Internet-based elections. The advantages included easy access to information about the candidates, ability to vote regardless of class location and time, ability to count ballots instantaneously and the elimination of error in ballot counting. In addition, the innovative and exciting approach appealed to students.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The college had several program requirements. First, they needed to secure the database to assure that only Santa Fe students voted, and that each student voted only one time. Second, the ballot needed to be accessible and compatible with several platforms and calculate accurate results. Third, the ballot had to be clear and understandable. Finally, the digital divide could not prevent some students from voting.

The program became the catalyst to introduce students to eSantaFe, the college's new online registration system. This system allowed the program to meet many of the above-mentioned technical challenges. Information Technology Services (ITS) programmers were able to place the system behind multiple firewalls.

Luis Baez, Election Commissioner for Student Government, assists first-year student Laurie Metcalf with logging in to the eVote during the 2003 Student Government elections.

Students log into eSanteFe as they would for other purposes. On election days, the option to vote appears and the student can be taken to the ballot, which is accompanied by simple instructions. After voting, the student clicks "Submit" and a "Thanks for Voting" message pops-up on the screen, with information about when and where the results will be announced. The accuracy of the database was checked during a testing phase.

Fortunately, ITS programmers overcame the digital divide. The college set-up a polling location outside the library, with four Internet-capable computers to support the eVote for 18 hours over the two-day span of elections. Staff were on site to train students to use eSantaFe and eVote. Over the two years that eVote has existed, the number of students requiring special assistance has dropped significantly. In the fall of 2002, the college began requiring that all students have access to a computer with Internet access. With course registration moving online completely, students will have to be familiar with the eSantaFe system to take classes. This will further reduce the number of students needing special assistance for eVote.

FUNDING

Student government elections are funded by the student government, which receives its funding through students' activity and service fees. ITS handles the online voting system and the staff support for the program. ITS, in turn, is funded out of the normal college operating expenses. ITS has not requested additional funding from the student government to pay for additional personnel time; they view this program as part of their overall mission.

Biggest Challenge: Extra responsibilities for elections staff.

The platform for the online voting, eSanteFe, is a relatively new system. While students may use eSanteFe to register for classes, check their grades, and perform a program audit, many others prefer to use alternate means for performing these tasks. As a result, elections staff take on the additional role of eSantaFe tutor, helping students log onto the system and learn how to use it. However, once students see how easy eSantaFe is to use, they are more likely to use it for the above-mentioned tasks in the future.

Key Ingredient: Student trust, system accuracy and security.

The system is error-proof and students trust it for class registration, grade retrieval and many other uses. The database that tabulates the ballots is accurate and secure.

RESULTS

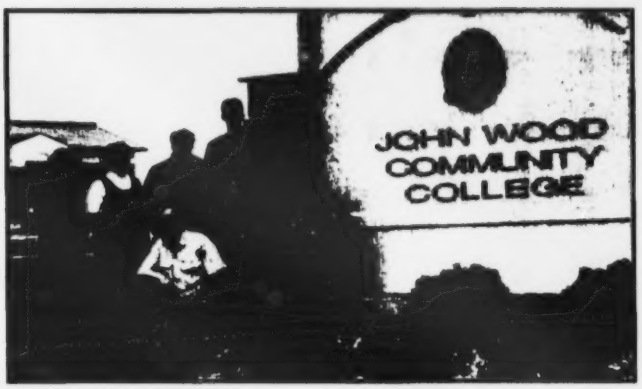
Student government officials receive early warning about the possible need for run-off elections. The college is able to determine voter participation by category: gender, age and ethnicity. The system is able to determine who did not vote, which makes it possible to target them during publicity campaigns for future elections. Upon retrieval of the demographic data, the Social Security numbers of voters are removed from reports. All staff with access to the data have signed confidentiality agreements.

In the two years since the program launched voter participation has soared. In year one there were 812 votes recorded out of 13,000 students or possible participants (6.2 percent participation). In year two, spring 2002, there were 1700 votes cast out of 13,500 possible participants (12.6 percent participating). While Internet voting is not the only reason for increased participation, it has certainly been a significant factor. ■

John Wood Community College

"If it hadn't been for this program, I'd probably be on welfare now. I really don't know what would have happened in my life without this training."

–from a woman who is now locally employed and attended the program after being laid off from an area manufacturer



Left to right: Cathy Codd, Instructor; Heidi Price, Program Developer and Instructor; Susan Deege, Program Developer and Director; Doug Barry, Instructor. Kneeling: Larry Flavell, Program Developer and Instructor. Sitting: Millie Barry, Instructor and Support Staff

Computer Connections

OBJECTIVES

The program seeks to bridge the digital divide that handicaps students and community members who seek employment and education.

Faculty and staff recognized that students and job seekers were frustrated and often emotionally defeated in spite of various credit and non-credit computer courses offered. Members of the Office of Career Services who were helping community members and college students prepare résumés discovered that even those individuals with significant work experience, often with company-specific computer programs, could not prepare a document, much less save it on a diskette. Assistants in college labs confirmed that although they were doing their best to work with individual students, the assistant/student ratio often prevented them from teaching effectively.

Bridging the digital divide is geared to the mission and setting of the college. Located in a predominately rural district where many people lack technical literacy, it seeks to promote the economic development of the area through instruction and training. Like many midwestern communities, the area is evolving from a manufacturing/agricultural to a service-oriented economy, requiring computer literate employees. The college is committed to supporting special student populations and most of the program participants are non-traditional.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Free Computer Connections classes began in May 2001. The program aims to break down participants' fear of technology. It provides access to hands-on, user-friendly instruction. Instructors use humor and assure students that they "cannot break these things, no matter how hard they try."

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This program does not compete with other college computer courses. When the sessions end, students are encouraged to sign up for other credit or non-credit classes. The group visits the labs so that everyone knows how to continue practicing and where to retrieve e-mail.

Each session has specific competency-based objectives such as establishing a free e-mail address via the Internet and sending e-mail messages to class members. If students cannot complete a particular objective, they return for an individualized lesson with an instructor. Some students, especially those with limited proficiency in English, have chosen to take the sequence twice.

Students are given a pre-class survey to determine any special requirements. Classes are held during day and evening hours. There are six sessions, each two to two-and-a-half hours long. A question and answer period ends each session. The college calls those who do not return for the second session and tries to intervene with special attention. The end-of-class survey is carefully reviewed and improvements have been made in response to student comments. Larger classes of 10-15 have both an instructor and an assistant.

Computer Connections students spend time on their computers, not listening to lectures. Although detailed workbook sheets are provided for reference, students can see a projection of the instructor's computer as they are verbally walked through the lessons. Repetition is crucial, with competencies demonstrated several times.

The program is directed toward community members who do not have access to computers or computer training. Flyers are distributed at public housing, the Department of Human Services, the women's shelter, the Salvation Army, parole officers, and other social service agencies. The Department of Health Services has required attendance by their single mothers who participate in a Job Club. The jail granted permission to one participant to leave jail and attend class in anticipation of a future job search after release. The Workforce Investment Act staff refer dislocated workers who are in desperate need of basic skills. English instructors and Support Services counselors refer students and hand out flyers in class.

The director of workforce programs and program assistant direct the program. The director of the college's foundation has also joined the team. The core teaching staff includes full- and part-time college employees.

FUNDING

The program was initially funded by Welfare to Work. Since September of 2002, most program costs have been covered by Southern Bell Company Exelerator funds, for which the college applied through its foundation. The program is free to participants.

Biggest Challenge: Finding instructors with the right personalities and teaching styles to work effectively with beginners. Instructors have definite competency goals in mind, but first and foremost they aim to eradicate participants' fear of computers.

Key Ingredient: Careful selection of instructors, easy-to-read and understand lessons, instruction with sense of humor and graciousness and class size limited to 15. Any college with a student-oriented focus could duplicate this program. No program could be more beneficial in terms of building employability and student efficacy skills.

RESULTS

An eclectic class was achieved as students of traditional age, who had not learned basic computer skills in high school, and community members, many with 10 to 20 or more years of working experience, participated in the courses.

A newly arrived local company has hired 40 percent of graduates of both courses. (Some graduates had the necessary computer skills but could not pass the strict background check.)

The program has served almost 300 students since its inception. About 30 percent of the first 150 participants who completed the course enrolled in other college classes after taking the Computer Connections courses. About 20 percent of the customer service students have found jobs.

Effective measures regarding self-confidence have been very positive and the college is now using a pre- and post-survey to gauge the effectiveness of the training. ■

Frederick Community College

Frederick Community College

"The Online Career Center provides services equal to the big name job Web sites and also allows me to complete self assessments. It is especially nice knowing that there is a career counselor, a real person available for me to contact by email or phone."

~a program participant

Left to right: Dr. Richard Haney, Vice President of Learning Support; Dr. Patricia Stanley, FCC President; Marci Dean, Job Placement Specialist /Advisor; Debby McClellan, Director of Counseling and Career Services; Lorraine Dodson, Coordinator of Career Services/Counselor

The Online Career Center

OBJECTIVES

Student Affairs is challenged to provide student services to distance education students.

The Career Center at Frederick Community College has responded to this challenge by creating an Online Career Center. Students are able to assess their needs, research resources and develop and implement an action plan.

The program seeks to offer distance education students the same or similar opportunities as on-campus students to successfully progress through the career process and develop a career plan. The goal is to match student traits such as values, skills, interests and personality to educational and occupational factors that fit those traits. Although the program began as a distance education initiative, it has become a resource for all students as well as the for the campus and business community.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The program offers a combination of interactive modules and links that are based on a five-step career process. The program takes students through self-awareness, career exploration, decision making, preparation and transition.

The Counseling and Career Services Department provides the Online Career Center, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is accessible from computers located across campus as well as from home computers owned by students and alumni. Four computers in the Career and Transfer (CAT) Center are designated for student use and two of them have the Web site up and running at all times. Handouts on how to register, log in and search the site are available in adjacent information racks.

Frederick Community College's campus

CAT Center staff work with students individually or in small groups to introduce the Online Career Center. In addition, faculty can request classroom presentations and staff conduct demonstrations for various affinity groups across campus.

Services include access to career assessment tools, such as career tutorials on "How to Write a Resume" or "How to Select a College Major;" career information via links to career resources; answers to questions through "Ask a Counselor;" resume posting tools; and lists of current job openings with local and regional employers.

Students and alumni can also access the calendar of upcoming events, such as visits by employers. The site provides a "Career Center Overview" and FAQs to help students learn more about navigating the site.

FUNDING

The design and implementation of the Career Center Web site was funded by a one-time grant intended to provide career services to distance learners. Once implemented, it became part of the college's overall Web site and is maintained by the college.

Biggest Challenge: Marketing the program to the business and campus community. It takes more than a "build it and they will come" mentality. Staff has demonstrated the Web site to everyone on campus, from the board of trustees to students attending freshman orientation. They have handed out flyers at student life events and posted them on every bulletin board. They have advertised in the local chamber's newsletter and submitted a press release to the local newspaper. However, reaching the business community has posed the biggest challenge.

Key Ingredient: The program provides a full range of career services anytime, anyplace for any student. Even though the original concept and Web site design was to provide career services to distance learners, the program is a valuable resource for students and the campus community as a whole.

RESULTS

The program was launched in August 2002 and has not yet been evaluated. A total of 369 job seekers have registered, with 159 résumés forwarded to employers. Currently, 132 employers are registered on the site. A total of 9,261 searches have been conducted, including those performed during the start-up phase and demonstrations to market the site. ■

First-Semester Student Experience

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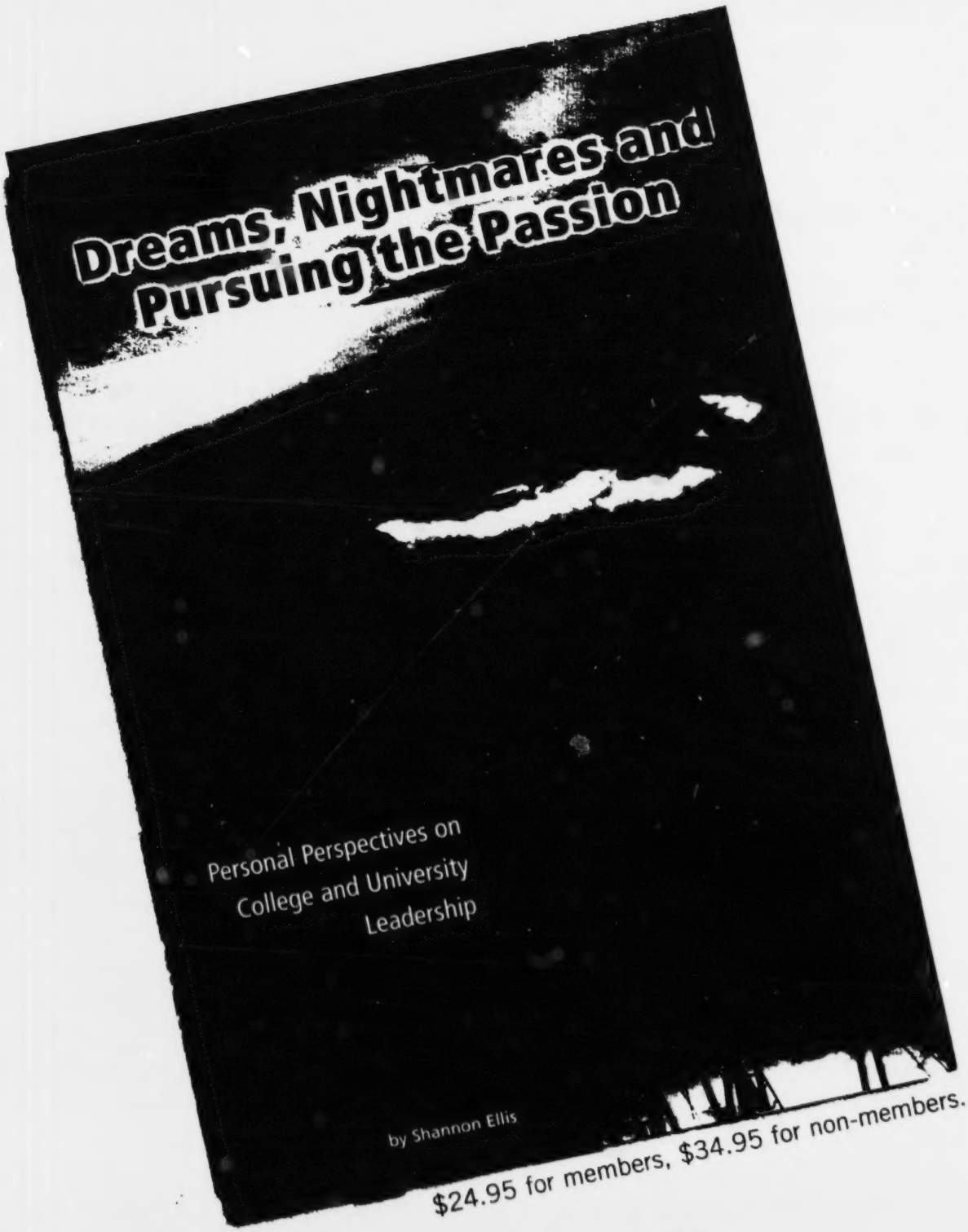
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